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POCAHONTAS COUNTY

Chapter 4 - Section 4

"The settlers who came into Pocahontas from 1640 to 1680 were of the same type as the earlier ones with the exception of two small nationality groups. The Irish came during the potato famine in Ireland. Among the Irish who came were the Clossens, Sullivans and Conways. Some Irish, of course, had come before this time. I can find no records of nationality groups and I believe none was kept, as the groups were not overly large, and they soon lost their racial integrity by intermarriage, or they moved on elsewhere and did not settle in nationality groups, for long, if at all."

THE DUTCH BOTTOM SETTLEMENT IN THE 1640's

The Reform church was established as the church of the Netherlands. Naturally there were many who protested against a move to mix the church and state. Pearl Buck in her book "The Exile" says there were 300 in the band in which her people sailed for America. They came to Pennsylvania to settle on land purchased by paper, but which turned out to be swamp land on which they could not even hope to exist. Many of them went back to the cities. About 100 of them came on south into what is now Pocahontas County.

The land in Pocahontas County was purchased from Paul McNeal by Rev. William Schimmertorn of New York. This land was on the Williams River and the place was known as Dutch Bottom after its settlement. This land was a high-level, fertile plain, free of swamps. There were wild mountains all around them. Upon this land stood great forests. The Indians roamed around them, though not hostile, they were terrifying to the Dutch. How strange and hard it was for these city-bred men and women, accustomed to the ease of a wealthy Dutch City, knowing nothing of farming and country life. Many of their number moved on again in those first two years, and in their third year the minister, who was their leader, died.

These hardships were the more hard to endure because within six months after they set sail, the home government reversed its policy and gave liberty of worship to its

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Dutch Bottom Settlement - cont'd

citizens.

During the winter of 1838 this small company of about 80 persons disbanded. Crops had not been good, and the men realizing they knew so little about farming, and their inability to endure the hardships of pioneer life in Focabontas, wanted to move to some town to go into some business there.

Among those who remained in Focabontas were the Stultings (Pearl Duske grandparents) and the Van Beemans, of which there are many in the county today. The Stultings built their new house on the edge of the English settlement of Hillebors in Little Levels.

Most of the Van Beemans today live on the Storey Creek section of the County in Edrey District.

From - The Exile - Buck

Focabontas Times - April 27, 1939

History of Foca. - Price

During these two decades 1840 - 1860 we did not get so many settlers as the west was being settled at that time and people passed on over going farther west. So many of our own people, especially from Little Levels, also moved on. There are so many McVeels, Beards, Cellicians, Porges, Hills, Gays, Bridgers and Clumens from Focabontas in one county in Missouri that it was often called "Little Virginia". Others also went to Ohio and Indiana. In 1840 the population of Focabontas was 2,922 and in 1860 only 3,698 an increase of only 1,036 persons.

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History of Foca. - Price

The upper part of the County had been mostly populated by the Germans and French, and the lower part of the county primarily by the Scotch - Irish. While the German names are still dominant in upper Foca, and the Scotch - Irish names in lower Foca, yet they have intermarried and did not long remain separate nationality groups.

During this period 1680 to 1690 farms in the county increased in number, but decreased in size. The original land holders who had owned, sometimes, thousands of acres began to divide them among their heirs, or to sell off portions of their vast estates. Mrs. L. W. Coyner here at Clover Lick tells us that her people, the Harbicks, lost a lot of their land by going on bonds or notes, and that the land was sold sometimes for as little as 50 cents per acre. This was, perhaps true of many of the land owners of the county. For in going through their wills and the settlement of their estates, I found that many of them were on notes and bonds. After these large farms or plantations were divided the average farm was from 200 acres to 1000 acres. They are still being divided yet today, until only one the Kevner estate in Greenbush District remains undivided. Many of the estates have passed completely out of the hands of the heirs of the original owners.

These people, of course, traded with each other to some extent. Bartering was done in Focbookes as elsewhere. Work, however, was the one thing they traded most with each other, for work was the one thing needed most to turn the wilderness into farms and to erect their log houses. When a man had a house to build or a field to be cleared, all the neighbors helped him and he in turn helped them. "Log rollings" and "house raisings" got much work done and also gave a chance for social contact not only for the men but for the women who got together and prepared the feast. Then there were the "huckling bees" and "quilting parties", all of which probably ended up in a dance that night. Work not exchanged was paid for with produce instead of money. (These will be taken up more in Chapter 5)

Their cattle, horses and sheep were sold to Lancaster, Pa., to Philadelphia, Baltimore, Richmond, Staunton and Winchester. Richmond especially was an excellent market for horses. The settlers would load up their pack horses with furs, hides, dried deer meat called deer saddle, a little leather, some few persons took a small amount of tobacco. They would go across the mountain, sell, or exchange their goods for lead, a little sugar and a little cloth, though most of the cloth was made at home. Their pack horses were also sold.

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